DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 417 377 CS 013 097

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TITLE Implementing Dramatization as an Effective Storytelling Method To Increase Comprehension.
PUB DATE 1998-05-00
NOTE 34p.; M.A. Research Project, Kean University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses (040) -- Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Art Activities; Classroom Research; Classroom Techniques; Comparative Analysis; *Dramatics; Kindergarten Children; *Learning Strategies; Pantomime; Primary Education; Puppetry; Reading Research; Role Playing; *Story Telling
IDENTIFIERS Drama in Education; *Retelling; Secaucus Township School District NJ; *Story Comprehension

ABSTRACT

A study examined two different methods used to increase story comprehension. These methods were implemented using two kindergarten classes from the Secaucus New Jersey Public School District during a 4-week instructional period. The students from one classroom listened to stories proceeded by dramatization. Retelling techniques used were role playing, puppet theater, flannelboard, and pantomiming. The other sample had the same stories orally read to them, however, these were followed by teacher instruction and an art activity related to the story. Both groups were then given reduced photocopies of the main parts of the story and asked to put these sequencing strips in correct order by gluing them onto construction paper. Results indicated that those students who used dramatization had greater comprehension. Findings suggest (by a significant 21.35-point difference) that children who reenact a story become more emotionally involved and therefore more interested. (Contains a table of data and 18 references; a list of related literature is appended.) (Author/CR)

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ED 417 377

IMPLEMENTING DRAMATIZATION AS AN EFFECTIVE STORYTELLING METHOD TO INCREASE COMPREHENSION

By
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Submitted in partial fullfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts.

Accepted
3/4/98

Kean University

May 1998

CS 013 057

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Abstract

This was a study of two different methods used to increase story comprehension. These methods were implemented using two kindergarten classes from the Secaucus New Jersey Public School District. The students from one classroom listened to stories proceeded by dramatization. In contrast, although the other classroom listened to the same stories, they were directed to complete an art activity. The purpose of the study was to determine which of these methods would prove to be more effective. Results indicated that those students who used dramatization had greater comprehension.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Dr. Albert Mazurkiewicz, Chairperson of the Department of Communication Sciences at Kean University, for encouraging me to continue pursuing my Masters Degree. If it were not for him, I would have taken a leave of absence for one year following the birth of my son. I truly believe that had he not been there to inspire me, my continued quest for a Masters Degree would have been delayed at the least.

I thank the administrators of the Secaucus, New Jersey Public School District for allowing me to pursue the answers to my questions.

Dedication

This paper is dedicated to my family. My husband, Dan, has given me the incentive and encouragement I needed throughout my years in graduate school. He has been extremely supportive and for that I thank him. I couldn't have done it without him.

I also thank my son, Daniel, for being so uplifting and making my life complete. He has given me the inspiration I needed.

Last, but never least, I give my mom and dad many, many thanks. They have always encouraged me to be carefree and to pursue my dreams. They've been right there with me every step of the way. For their devotion, their generosity, and for their love, I am extremely grateful.

I love you all!!!

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I. Means, Standard Deviations and t of Story Reenactments vs Art Activities

Researchers have recently attempted to delineate further the effects of social dramatic and thematic-fantasy play on children's cognitive functioning. These researchers generally found that training preschoolers in social dramatic or thematic-fantasy play had positive effects on their performance on standardized measures of language production and story comprehension. Preschoolers were exposed to the following conditions: thematic-fantasy play, sociodramatic play, adult-lead discussions, or constructive art activities. Pellegrini and Galda (1982) indicates that children in sociodramatic play performed higher than the other groups on a number of cognitive measures, one of which was story comprehension. For kindergartners and first graders, story-related comprehension was most effectively facilitated by engaging in fantasy play and retellings. Engaging in discussion was less effective then play but more effective than drawing. However, comprehension was most effectively facilitated when children's concepts of stories were accommodated to peers' story concepts through fantasy play and retellings.

Strickland (1989) indicates that the development of vocabulary and syntactic complexity in oral language is enhanced in children who are frequently exposed to stories. Reading stories to children gives them a model for developing vocabulary and syntax. Realizing that a child acquires language through active participation and that literature provides rich language models, storytelling and retellings is an excellent technique for fostering growth in language and increasing comprehension. The use of props and other creative storytelling come alive, exciting the imagination and involv-

ing the listeners. Some stories lend themselves to the use of puppets, felt-board; and still others can be developed as prop stireis. These techniques and other similar ones are quite effective in getting young children to tell stories. Strickland's review of studies indicate that giving children the opportunity to tell stories helps their language development by sense of story structure, and comprehension. It allows them to become active participants in the creation of language.

Altieri (1991) explains that dramatic activities provide children with the opportunity to respond in a variety of creative ways. They may write plays, put on puppet shows or videotape a commercial to promote their favorite book. Allowing children to become involved with favorite characters not only helps to develop empathy but also promotes appreciation of literature at a higher level by internalizing characters' feelings. The dramatic activities also provide both teacher and students opportunities to relive favorite pieces of quality literature.

Although researchers as well as educators have stated that retelling or reenacting a story increases a child's comprehension and story memory. Presently, concerns have been raised over school age children having difficulties with comprehension thus further research on this topic is necessary.

Martinez (1993) Reported that preschoolers who reenacted stories did better on a story memory task and were better able to connect and integrate events in telling a story than did children in a storybook reading group or a control group. Kindergartners and first graders who reenacted stories had

better recall and comprehension of those stories than did their peers who reconstructed stories in teacher-led discussions and through art activities.

HYPOTHESIS

In an attempt to add evidence on this topic, the following study was undertaken. It was hypothesized that children would exhibit significantly better comprehension and story memory by using dramatic story reenactments then those children who reconstruct stories in teacher led instruction and art activities.

PROCEDURES

Two kindergarten classes were identified to take part in a four week instructional period and randomly assigned to treatments. One sample had four stories orally read to them followed by four retelling techniques. The techniques used were role-playing, puppet theatre, flannelboard and pantomiming. The other sample had the same stories orally read to them, however, these were followed by teacher instruction and an art activity related to the story. Both samples then received sequencing strips that they were directed to put into correct order. The strips were reduced photocopies of main parts of the story. The students were asked to glue the strips down on construction paper.

During the four week period, the number of correct sequencing strips per child in each sample was collected and the samples total mean scores were tested for any significance.

RESULTS

Mean scores, standard deviations and t-test results for different story recall conditions are presented in Table I. As can be seen in Table I below, there was a 21.35 difference between the means of the samples in which reenactments were used after listening to a story, as compared to doing an art activity. This difference was found to be statistically significant below the .05 level.

Table I

Means, Standard Deviations and t of
Story Reenactments vs Art Activities

Samples	Mean	Standard Deviation	t
Story Reenactments	75.30	50.57	2.03
Art Activities	53.95	4.56	

Sig <.05

CONCLUSIONS

Data from the study support the hypothesis that children will exhibit greater comprehension and story memory by using dramatic story reenactments than those children who reconstruct stories in teacher led instruction and art activities.

The significant (21.35) point difference between the two samples suggest that children who reenact a story become more emotionally involved and therefore more interested. The story then becomes more real, more special and more impactful. Greater comprehension and recall are merely added rewards to this fun and exciting method of storytelling.

DRAMATIZATION EFFECTS: RELATED LITERATURE

Creative drama and poetry are often neglected, yet they are important aspects of a holistic approach to the language arts. Drama encourages children to use language for meaningful purposes by actively involving them and motivating them to read, write, listen, and speak. Creative drama has other benefits as well. Henderson and Shanker (1978) found that students who dramatized stories answered comprehension questions better than did students who only read the story. Miccinati and Phelps (1980) suggested that drama allows teachers to determine children's comprehension. Graves (1983) also suggested creative drama as a way to enhance comprehension. Danielson and Dauer continue to state that books written for children invite participation and that it must be read aloud to be fully enjoyed. (Danielson and Dauer, 1990)

Danielson and Dauer continue by mentioning different types of creative drama that can be used. The types mentioned included finger plays (short rhymes that when recited encourage the use of hand or body movements to act them out), pantomime (situations or objects helps children to think about the nonverbal behaviors and attitudes that convey meaning without words), Readers Theater (a dramatic reading of the script), sensory awareness (encourages students to participate in creative drama activities by beginning to recognize the importance of their senses as they become attuned to sounds, sights, smells, tastes, and textures), storytelling (an ancient form of our oral language tradition that increases both language abilities and internalization of the characteristics of stories), choral reading (involves students taking turns reading a poem together), role playing (taking the role of another person which increas-

es the child's understanding of others) and lastly characterization (when students begin to consider characterization, they focus their imagination and concentration on the the characters themselves - what they look like, how they think, feel and act. (Danielson and Dauer, 1990)

Rich and Blake theorize that picture drawing also increases comprehension. Although I agree that picture drawing increases comprehension, it is my opinion that dramatization increases comprehension significantly more than picture drawing. However, they state that using pictures-mental pictures-is a proven strategy to enhance recall. Referred to as mental or visual imagery, this strategy involves formulating a picture or series of pictures in the student's mind to help him or her remember specific items. They point out that in mainstream school settings, the textbook-based content approach is to a large degree the most commonly used instruction method and that there is a strong need to present students with strategies that are more effective. The strategies need to be suited to individual strengths and weaknesses and to the demands of the tasks at hand. Strategy instruction must ensure that students will be motivated and committed to the teaching/learning process, and that ultimately they will independently select, employ, and monitor strategy use. Rich and Blake also propose that when students are responsible for selecting the strategies they find efficient, give the demands of the task, they are more likely to become self-regulated learners. (Rich and Blake, 1994)

Rich and Blake provide an overview of a program that was developed to enhance the comprehension of fourth and fifth grade students with lan-

guage and reading problems. Part of the program students were taught a series of strategies, one of which was a picture-drawing strategy in which they were taught to draw pictures to represent main ideas of text. Students were taught to self-question, to generate summary statements, to write notes, and to draw pictures.

Students were given small squares of adhesive notes and were encouraged to draw pictures of the main ideas as they read along or listened. Therefore, the drawings allowed them to recall the information they had constructed from the text they had read or heard. Students became able to draw a picture as a visual summary of text and able to use the pictures to generate summary statements. Blake and Rich state that in the postreading and listening phase, picture drawing can be used to integrate and summarize information. They also mention that a series of pictures can serve as an alternative to the traditional written outline, semantic map, or series of notes. (Rich and Blake, 1994)

Although students seemed enthusiastic about the picture-drawing strategy and felt that it was helpful, I believe that dramatization further provides a visual strategy and therefore increases comprehension more than picture drawing. As Miller and Mason (1983) also state that dramatics may be better than discussion and drawing for developing story comprehension. They further state that Pellegrini and Galda (1982) found this to be true in a study they conducted of 108 children (54 boys and 54 girls) from kindergarten, first, and second grades. The children dramatized a story after it was read to them and

then they took a 10-item criterion referenced test. There was an important finding, that thematic-fantasy play was best for developing story comprehension and improved the children's understanding of story language.

Teachers are constantly looking for new activities to breathe life into their reading programs and story dramatization is such an activity. Creative dramatics (role playing) develops the whole child without diminishing the uniqueness of the the individual. Its risk-free atmosphere allows each child to make a contribution and it also allows children to get on their feet and relieve the tedium of the school day and offers an active fresh start on learning tasks. Miller and Mason continue to state that their body of research indicated the dramatics can enhance readiness, vocabulary development, oral reading skills, reading comprehension, and self-concept from kindergarten through at least junior high school. Comprehension skills are developed through the active reconstruction of a story, which brings the characters, setting, and plot from the written page into the classroom and into the minds of the children. The nonjudgmental nature of dramatics makes it enjoyable and leads to improvements in children's self-concepts.

Miller and Mason (1983) conclude by stating that the benefits of role playing take time to establish with other children and that dramatics influences students' abilities over the long term, so teacher commitment to use dramatics often and as an integral part of the reading program is important because it will offer many positive effects.

Although research involving dramatics as a means to enhance learning

to read is rather limited, that which has been completed indicates that dramatics is a promising instructional method. Albert (1994) stresses the importance of exploration and hands-on activity in learning by beginning with exploratory play in infancy, and sociodramatic play in early childhood. Individuals continue to learn through playing with things, ideas, and language in a social setting. In an effort to apply this theory to practice, educators have tried new techniques such as interactive work with computers and even drama in the classroom which can provide action; experimentation; exploration of character, motive, and text. Since it provides expanded contexts for language learning in a cooperative social setting, drama in the classroom offers educational benefits in every area of current concern,

(building skills in reading and oral and written language, increasing student motivation and comprehension, involves students in decision-making and develops critical thinking and analytic skills in study of character and script) Drama work is a useful teaching strategy for learners of any age, it is particularly well suited in classes for young adolescents. They are highly motivated to participate in drama because acting is seen as an admirable adult activity through the example of TV and movie stars. Teachers can build on common background by discussing the authenticity of character portrayals in performances that students have seen.

Enthusiasm for drama in the classroom is fueled by the excitement of the students and by seeing how much it contributes to their development. Henderson and Shanker(1978) also state that interpretive dramatics activities

may be a more effective method than workbooks for use in conjunction with basal readers to develop the comprehension skills of recognition and recall of details, sequencing of events, and generalizing the main idea. The study conducted sought to determine whether dramatic activities could be used successfully as an alternative approach to basal reader workbooks for the purpose of developing certain comprehension skills mentioned. The interpretive dramatic activities included discussions, dramatic play, puppets, pantomime, and some elements of self-directed dramatics - the pupil's spontaneous interpretation of a character of his own choosing form a story which he reads in a group.

Henderson and Shanker (1978) continue by stating that Odell (1973) has suggested that non-reading activities in the classroom can help pupils develop processes that will cause them to improve their reading. For example, substituting dramatic activities for workbook pages may be an ideal way to make reading situations meaningful, and thus to enhance comprehension. Maxwell (Berman, 1974) also believes that comprehension is increased through immediate personal reconstruction of stories.

Researchers, such as Axline (1947), have evaluated the use of dramatic activities as a device to improve self-concept. Koziol (1973) points out that little research has been carried out to determine whether drama can be used as a major component in the area of reading comprehension. Carlton and Moore (1968) found that use of "self-directive dramatization" not only enhanced children's self-esteem, but also brought about gains in reading.

This study (Henderson and Shanker, 1978) consisted of 28 second grade

pupils. All were African American and came form a low socio-economic area. The sample consisted of three groups: group A, primer; group B, first reader; and group C, second reader. Group assignments were based on the results of the basal reader achievement tests. Ten pupils were assigned to groups A and C. Eight pupils were assigned to group B. Sixteen tests were constructed for each reading group to be given at the conclusion of each story and follow-up-workbook or drama session. A total of forty eight tests were given. Each test consisted of five objective items: two multiple choice questions on recognition and recall of details, two questions on sequencing of events and one question on main idea.

The study can be described in two phases. During phase one groups A and C were exposed to the basal reader and interpretive dramatics, while group B was taught by the basal reader and workbook method. When eight stories had been completed by each group, phase two began, which consisted of the reversed presentation of activities. For both methods the teacher's manual was followed for presenting new vocabulary, decoding skills, and silent and oral reading activities. For the traditional method, workbook pages on story comprehension were given to the students as reinforcement activities. Children worked independently and then a teacher-made comprehension test was given. The interpretive dramatics groups received no workbook pages pertaining to story comprehension. Instead, the groups dramatized the stories. All children participated for each story which caused most stories to be acted out more then once. Then the teacher and group discussed what was accom-

plished during the dramatization and to see whether critical elements of the story were accurately interpreted. When all pupils had participated in the dramatization, a final discussion was held to review what was accomplished. At this point the tests were given.

The t-test was used to determine the significance of the raw scores on the teacher-made tests. The t-ratios for the differences of the means of the scores for the three categories of comprehension tested were 10.20, 13.80, and 10.61 for recognition of details, sequencing of events and generalizing the main idea. In each case these were significant at the .001 level, indicating that the pupils achieved much higher scores in all three areas of comprehension during the dramatics sessions. Not only does this study show that dramatic activities may be more effective than workbooks to develop many skills including comprehension, but the pupils also showed a greater interest in reading during the dramatic sessions.

Saccardi (1996) states that emerging readers need books that enable them to be successful early on so that they will continue to read throughout their lives. Books that are predictable and have repetitive language patterns or story patterns are very helpful for children and are easier to dramatize. McGruder (1993) says that creative dramatics and other dramatic activities are a wonderful way to help children develop a strong self-concept, gain a better understanding of language, and to come to grips with the concept of story. Children can dramatize stories by acting out the parts themselves or creating simple mouse and cat puppets.

Reading comprehension was also examined in the "Reader Retelling Profile" which is meant to assess the readers' ability to connect their cultural backgrounds, experiences, prior knowledge and the immediate purpose for reading to the text. A high rating in the reader response section of the profile indicated that readers were actively engaged in negotiating meaning with the text. Readers' response to text reflects the unique and necessary contributions of readers in reading comprehension. Well organized retellings indicate that the readers are confident in their interpretations of the text, are comfortable with their personal responses to the reading, and have made decisions about the importance of certain key details and ideas to include over other less important facts. (Hernandez-Miller, ERIC 343 102)

The whole process of learning to comprehend written stories begins for most individuals in our society during early childhood. The comprehension of written stories starts with learning to comprehend everyday situations, but it is the child's direct experiences with written stories that brings the process to fruition. These direct experiences with stories are usually two types. Initially there is storybook time and as the child becomes familiar with reading books through story time, there is another way in which the child experiences written story: independent reenactments of familiar books. Both of these types of experiences are beneficial to learning to comprehend written language. Through the work of Holdaway (1979), Sulzby (1983, in press), and Doake (1981) we come to realize the role which independent reenactments play in the process of storybooks. During independent reenactments the child is not

only polishing and refining what was learned through social interaction but is also creating new knowledge about books and reading. Thus, through two primary avenues - participation in storybook time and independently reenacting storybooks the child comes to learn how to comprehend a story. (Learning to Comprehend Written Language, ERIC 255871)

Miccinati and Phelps (1980) express that when a child is given a story it adds a liberal dose of childhood imagination and a child's natural ability to play-act. Drama is a natural companion to reading instruction, for as Ross and Roe (1977) have pointed out, drama requires the same language abilities and thinking skills which are fundamental to reading. A child who is acting out a story must both comprehend and express the important details of plot and character, word meanings, the sequence of the story, and relationships of cause and effect. This requires the ability to interpret, draw inferences and to apply one's own knowledge and experiences to the story. It also requires attention to what other characters are saying and doing and an awareness of how ideas are being communicated, both physically and verbally. The student gets immediate feedback on the success of this communication.

Classroom drama is also an important motivator. Children are encouraged to read for many reasons: to find a story for dramatization, to decide what parts of a story should be dramatized, to understand the characters and actions of the story, to find the spelling of a word for their script, and to consult other books for suggestions about characterization, etc. Dramatic activities create motivation and calls upon the creativity of children, one of the least

used and most potent resources they bring to the classroom.

Reading related improvisations also allow teachers to assess students' comprehension of what they have read and their ability to express that comprehension. Dramatic play can be an outlet; both physical and verbal, for students who might otherwise have no way to express their understanding or feeling about what they have read or heard. These children can show what they mean. Creative drama is an integral part of reading instruction. It gives children a chance to express their reactions to a story. It encourages them to read and reread to understand the story. It allows them to sharpen their sense of how a story works, how the elements of character, plot, action, and setting work together.

Most important, when children are able to act out stories which they have read, they are demonstrating for themselves that reading is something more than word calling. It allows them to make of their reading something lively, something enjoyable, something with meaning for them and for others. This understanding that reading is meaningful should be a basic goal of any reading program. Classroom drama is a valuable and workable means of involving children in their reading. Dramatization should be a part of a child's formal learning experience. The children themselves possess all the resources needed for successful classroom drama. All it takes to begin is the willingness to try. (Miccinati and Phelps, 1980)

Educators have long recognized that reading to young children helps them assimilate sophisticated language structures, accumulate background

information, and develop interest in learning to read (Chomsky, 1972; Cohen, 1968; Durkin, 1966). Active participation in activities involving literature has been widely recommended to enhance comprehension, oral language ability, and a sense of story structure(Blank and Sheldon, 1971; Bower, 1976; Brown, 1975).

Retelling stories has been used frequently as an assessment tool in studying developmental trends in comprehending stories and for investigating other strategies to improve story comprehension(Bowman, 1981; Spiegel and Whaley, 1980; Stein and Glenn, 1979). Retelling stories is also an active procedure which involves children in reconstructing literature. This appears to be a strategy which can improve comprehension, concept of story and oral language. (Morrow, 1985)

Morrow (1985) summarizes the findings of three related research studies that investigated the benefits of involving children in story retelling and particular strategies for reading stories to children. Morrow continues to state that if they have kindergartners simply retell a story that has been read to them, it could possibly improve their comprehension of that story. The research also investigated the following question: Would guided practice in retelling stories over a period of time improve a child's ability to answer both traditional comprehension questions about the stories and questions about the structures of those stories?

A recent survey of nursery schools and kindergarten revealed that children rarely get the opportunity to retell stories either to their teachers or to

the rest of the class. This is cause for concern since evidence suggests that retelling a story provides interaction between teller and listener and offers the active participation in literature that is so widely recommended. Letting youngsters retell stories was seen by many teachers as too time consuming, a frill, and a practice with no documented educational value. The same survey found that when stories were read or told to youngsters in nursery schools and kindergartens, the stories were typically neither preceded nor followed by questions or discussions. The few times that teachers did ask questions about stories, they usually asked only for recall of factual detail.

Teachers rarely asked questions that emphasized structural elements of a story, such as setting, theme, plot episodes, and resolution, or that elicited interpretive and critical thinking. The presentations of stories showed little or no evidence of providing children with organizational strategies for understanding the material. (Morrow, 1985)

Morrow (1985) further states that parents of children in story retelling groups said their youngsters were eager to retell stories that had just been read to them at home. Children in story retelling groups showed more confidence, eagerness, and poise when asked at the end of a study to retell stories.

Letting emergent readers retell stories is a valid and valuable instructional technique. Guiding them in the retelling is even better as children then can become actively involved in literature experiences. Both retellings and guided discussions are likely to result in development of comprehension, a sense of story structure, and oral complexity in the use of language.

As Morrow, Bidwell (1992) also agrees that using drama in the classroom is essential and effectively integrates the language arts. Plays, poetry, folk tales, trade books, and novels come alive for students through drama. In order to act, students must understand their parts deeply and on more than one level. Students must read and reread the text and ask questions of their peers in order to understand how to play the part. Students enjoy it because of the added variety and excitement and most importantly because it is fun. Drama allows students the opportunity to be involved in their reading instruction through acting.

Using puppets is an effective way to enhance reading and language instruction for shy children who are not comfortable performing or speaking in class. With puppets, children who are hesitant to speak can feel more at ease.

Through a variety of expressive arts, young learners are able to process meaning in ways that allow them to deepen and expand their understanding. Dramatization is one of those expressive arts. Drama evokes higher order thinking, problem solving, feeling, and language as students strive to demonstrate their knowledge orally (Booth, 1987). The children invent most of the dialogue and action, drawing ideas from the environment, their reading,a nd their background knowledge. They use their bodies and their voices as ways of communicating their understandings.(Hoyt, 1992)

In whole class dramatics, students portray body motions and appropriate sound effects as the teacher reads a story aloud. They can sensitize their bodies to the descriptors used in a story as they really feel the sun beating

on their skin. Visualizations of particular scenes from literature or history can be enhanced by encouraging the students to spontaneously take roles of the characters. In addition to expanding their understanding of text, these children were also engaging in communication, problem solving, and interactive group processes. After dramatic interactions, students can be encouraged to recreate a story with pictures or writing. These retellings often reflect powerful new understandings of the story and are punctuated with specific details of the setting and mood. Furthermore, because of the dramatic interaction that preceded the writing, children are able to write with clarity and purpose. (Hoyt, 1992)

Classrooms that offer children a variety of communication systems facilitate learning in ways that stimulate the imagination, enhance language learning, and deepen understanding. These communication options present learners with the opportunity to create a tighter link between themselves and the new learning. Knowing about reading and writing isn't enough. We must make an unrestrained effort to link learning to real-life purposes. We must also find ways to engage the learner's affective as well as cognitive self through a wide variety of interactions and experiences in many kinds of literacies.

Comprehension cannot be fostered by transmitting information from page to the children's heads or by drilling the children with questions. Learning occurs when one creates a personal interpretation. This interpretation can take the form of a feeling, an artistic expression, or a rush of language as the individual makes a verbal connection to the new information. As we strive

to help children make connections between their world and the world of print, we need to keep in mind that it isn't enough to have a reader's time and attention. We need to help learners activate their senses, their imaginations, their emotions, and all their life experiences while interacting with text. With the support of multiple communication systems, even learners with special needs can bring life into the words on the page. (Hoyt, 1992)

Carlton and Moore (1966) conducted a study to obtain answers to the following questions: (1) Can significantly greater gains in reading be achieved with groups of culturally disadvantaged elementary school children through the use of classroom self-directive dramatization of stories than through methods involving the traditional use of basal readers in small groups or in the whole class? (2) Can favorable changes in the self-concept of culturally disadvantaged elementary school children be brought about through classroom self-directive dramatization of stories?

Self -directive dramatization of stories as it is used in this study refers to the pupil's original, imaginative, spontaneous interpretation of a character of his own choosing in a story which is formed only for the time being and for a particular story. It also involves self-selection of stories, and for this purpose many books of many levels and varieties are available at all times in the classroom. Self-concept involves "what a child thinks he is, what he thinks he can do, and what he thinks he cannot do.

Results showed significantly greater gains in reading were achieved in the study by groups of culturally disadvantaged elementary school children

through the use of classroom self-directive dramatization of stories which pupils selected and read than through the use of methods involving the traditional techniques of the basal readers in small groups or in the whole class. There is also evidence to indicate that through the use of self-directive dramatization favorable changes occurred in the self-concept of the children.(Carlton and Moore, 1966)

Gray (1987) states that the value of creative dramatics as a viable classroom tool has long been debated by researchers and practitioners alike. A myriad of worthwhile outcomes, including critical thinking, concentration, reading comprehension improvement, and basic skills, have been cited by its proponents. Creative drama is here defined as "structured and cooperatively-planned playmaking...usually developed from a simple story, folk tale, poem, or scenes from a long book. It goes beyond dramatic play or simple improvisation in that it has a form with a beginning, middle, and end. The dialogue is always created by the players, whether the content is taken from a story, poem, or chapter of a book.

With regard to creative drama as it relates more specifically to reading, Carlton and Moore (1966), using a technique they termed self-directive dramatization, concluded that significantly greater gains in reading were achieved through the use of this method in combination with stories which students selected and read than through the use of methods involving the traditional techniques of the basal readers in small groups or in the whole class.

Yawkey (1980) worked with five year olds in examining the effects of

play in increasing reading achievement. Scores on the Gates-McGinitie Reading Test were significantly higher for children who used play to rehearse story passages than for those in the control group. As a result of a review of experimental studies in creative dramatics, Massey and Koziol (1978) concluded that "work in creative dramatics can be a positive influence on cognitive development generally and on the comprehension and retention of literature." (Gray, 1987)

Gray (1987) conducted a study that is primarily concerned with the relationship that exists between creative dramatics and reading comprehension. The goal of the study is to answer the questions, "Does creative drama positively affect reading comprehension? Will students who dramatically reenact stories achieve significantly higher scores on a post reading comprehension test than those students who do not engage in dramatic reenactment?"

The results of Gray's (1987) study seemed to support the hypothesis that students who reenact stories dramatically, achieve significantly higher scores on a post reading comprehension test than those students who do not engage in the reenactment. Results indicated that the students in this study more competently answered inferential-type questions if they had previously participated in the creative dramatization of the basal story.

Gray (1987) continues to state that a few tentative educational implications can be drawn from this study. The first is that creative dramatics, far from being a "frill," is a viable instructional tool when used in conjunction with reading. Students are required to practice story comprehension through

recalling details, sequencing events, generalizing main ideas, defining characters, and utilizing story vocabulary. The student "experiences" the story firsthand as one of its characters. An intimate understanding of its meaning evolves. In addition, creative dramatics can be easily incorporated into the reading lesson. In the amount of time that it takes for a formal discussion of the story, reenactment of it can just as easily occur.

The second implication that Gray (1987) states is that it stems from the observation that students seemed to take a greater interest in reading during the creative drama session. They appeared eager to recall events and sequence them, and to discuss characters and their motives. Most of all, students actively took part in the reenactment and nearly all the pupils asked to replay the drama for a third time even though class time was running out.

In conclusion, Gray (1987) found that this study has provided information which should be useful when planning a basal reading lesson. The results here should help to emphasize the notion that creative dramatics can be used in place of and/or in addition to the more traditional story discussion. Dramatics, is play that works!

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